

Addendum to Meetinghouse on the Green

January 21, 2023 Rev.

Edited by Richard Keleher and Dian Pekin

1. Pigeon Problem

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: Why is there wire mesh enclosing the belfry?

During the summer of 1980, I interviewed for and agreed to take the position of Sexton at First Parish Church, beginning on September 1st.

Before I began working, I attended several services to get a sense of the congregation and what the services were about.

After one of the summer services, and later in the afternoon, I drove by the church and saw that the front door was standing open. I pulled into the driveway and noticed that there were people on the bell deck of the steeple and I could hear them talking. I decided to check-out the activity and introduce myself. I eventually found my way up the steeple and climbed the ladder out on the bell deck. There were three men busy hauling buckets out of the dome down to the bell deck via an additional ladder. Apparently, one of the windows in the dome had broken and pigeons had been nesting there for quite some time. The man in the dome was shoveling pigeon guano into the bucket and handing the bucket down to the men on the bell deck. I thought to myself, "What have I gotten myself into?" I later learned that the three men were, George King, Bud King and Rusty Wheeler.

The saga of pigeons in the belfry did not end with cleaning the guano out of the dome and repairing the broken window. Over the next few years, the pigeons came back and were nesting all around the bell deck. They were making guano deposits on the bell and all over the deck.

The Building & Grounds Committee decided to contact a pest removal service to remove the pigeons. The committee worked out the details, and I was only to open the Meeting House on the designated Saturday. The removal company would take it from there.

I was surprised not to see the pest control people unloading traps, but didn't give it much thought, I just went about my business. The revelation came the next day, Sunday morning, when pigeons were wobbling around the ground, and falling over dead. There were dead

pigeons on the front lawn and all over our driveway. Needless to say, this was a shocking sight for parishioners, and the children were particularly disturbed to see such a sight. As you might have already guessed, the pest control company had used poison to eliminate the pigeons! It was a temporary solution, however, because the pigeons still came back. Therefore, a different solution was called for. Eventually, it was suggested that a wire mesh could be installed over the open spaces around the bell deck to keep the pigeons out.

The wire mesh remains to this day, almost invisible from the ground, and it works beautifully! It is an “elegant” solution to an undesirable pigeon problem.

2. The Dome

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What is the history of gilding the dome?

In 1841, the Meeting House was rotated 90 degrees and remodeled in the Greek Revival style of architecture, with a gilded dome on the steeple. That Meeting House burned in 1900, and was rebuilt as a nearly 80 percent replica of the 1841 Meeting House.

By the 1940's, the gilded dome was looking like it needed to be re-gilded. A person whose name has not been recorded, was hired to gild the dome. A few months after the dome was gilded, it began to turn black. The man had painted the dome with gold colored paint, not gold leaf. The congregation had the dome stripped and allowed the copper to oxidize, but no one liked how it looked. So, in 1955 the dome was painted a sky blue, with the hope that it would be less expensive than having the dome gilded every few years.

In 1985, Chris Burgess, a steeplejack from Pembroke, Massachusetts, was given the contract to repaint the steeple, and gild the clock faces and the numerals. It was also proposed that the dome be restored to its original design with gold leaf.

In August of the same year, the congregation called a special hearing to consider the dome being gilded. The hearing lasted an hour and a half with a debate about the cost of gilding the dome. The question discussed was how should the gilding be paid for? Should the gilding be paid for through separate donations, or financed out of annual pledges? It was decided that the gilding should be paid for through separate donations. There was also a heated exchange about where the gold in the gold leaf came from. One person proposed that the gold in the gold leaf should not come from South Africa due to the government instituted apartheid

policies. One brave soul stood up and asked, “Do you know if the gold in the wedding band you are wearing came from South Africa?” It was finally decided that it was not possible to determine where the gold came from. The final outcome was that both the congregation and the Historic Districts Commission approved the dome gilding.

Addendum 1: The Dome

When the orb and trident on the weathervane (above the dome) was removed for gilding, I suggested we place a time-capsule in the orb. A hole was cut in the orb in order to insert the items. Then I took a photograph of Dana Greeley and Eric Smith as they ceremoniously added a written statement, dated coins and a Sunday school pin, to the inside of the orb. The weathervane was then put back into place. The photograph can be seen in the Facility Manager’s office.

3. Toll Rope

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: Has the toll rope ever been replaced? Why does it take two people to toll the bell?

There are three ways the Meeting House bell in the steeple can be rung. 1) The clock mechanism strikes on the hour with a separate hammer. 2) The bell can be rocked on its yoke wheel by pulling the rope in the Sanctuary Vestibule, which activates a clapper hanging inside the bell. 3) A separate rope is attached to a separate hammer that lies on the bell deck floor for tolling the bell. That rope to that hammer is located in the balcony of the Sanctuary, at the right side of the organ (as you face the front of the church), and next to the door leading up and into the steeple.

On April 27, 1982, a small group of parishioners assembled on the Meeting House lawn at Reverend Dana Greeley’s invitation. It was the one hundredth anniversary of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s death. The group had assembled around the bell on the Meeting House lawn which had been tolled for Emerson’s Funeral Service in 1882.

At a precise moment, I was to begin tolling the bell in the Meeting House steeple, and with one pull, the rope broke. I leaned through an open window and explained the situation. The service did not end as planned. (Or, had Emerson had something to do with it?)

It was a bit of a task to replace the new hemp rope, running it through a hole in the bell deck, and threading it through pulleys.

The second time the tolling rope broke was in 2020, when I was explaining how to toll the steeple bell. Irl Smith stepped-up and helped reconnect the broken sections.

Addendum 1, Repairs to Historic Buildings:

Several years ago, I attended a seminar for “owners and people who take care of historic properties,” at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. One major point was made during the seminar, it was that any repairs or replacements should be made with the same type of material. It may seem more reasonable to replace a hemp rope with a longer lasting plastic rope. However, over many years, the small replacements of original materials with modern ones, add up to changing the integrity of the historic building.

We followed the same approach in order to “retain the integrity” of the Meeting House in 1999, when the white oak bell wheel was deteriorating to the point it could not be rocked. We had the bell wheel exactly reproduced by hand, using white oak rather than replacing it with an iron wheel.

Addendum 2, It Takes Two to Toll:

Why does it take two people to toll the bell? Throughout New England, there was not a common consensus as to tolling the Meeting Houses’ bells. Since my time at First Parish, we have tolled the bell once for each decade in which a person has lived, with five second intervals between each single ring. I was not intelligent enough to count where I was in the total rings while also counting the five seconds in between. Having a second person count the actual rings has saved me from embarrassment for losing track of the count.

4. Steeple Clock

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

What is the history of the fabulous clock in the steeple?

After the tragic fire of 1900, the Meeting House was rebuilt as an 80% replica of the structure that had stood there before.

One major change was with the steeple clock. Before the fire, the clock had only three faces that were solid and painted black. The replacement clock was purchased by the town as the official time. The clock is an E. Howard, seven-day, weight-driven, four-face clock. The faces have glass in them and are illuminated at night by electric lights. The town agreed to pay for the electricity with a reduction meter.

When I arrived at First Parish, Rusty Wheeler directed me to go to the town electric plant and request new bulbs as needed. Over the years, I made many trips to pick-up a case of new bulbs for the town clock. On one trip in the 1990's, I requested a case of bulbs for the town clock, and I was greeted with, "What town clock?" It seems that the men of Rusty's generation had all retired or died. First Parish then began buying the bulbs for the clock.

Later, in the 1990's, during some electrical work, the town removed the reduction meter. That action finally ended any surviving connection between Church and State.

The E. Howard clock is driven by two weights, in two separate channels that go all the way from the steeple to the ground. The time-drive weight is 200 pounds, and the strike-drive weight is 1300 pounds, with a 60-pound hammer.

On the floor of the clock room, there is a large hand-crank used to wind each of the weights separately. Each week two men would climb the stairs to the steeple, and one would wind the clock-drive weight, and the other would wind the strike-drive weight. They were known as, "The Guild of First Parish Clock Winders." I did not know about the Guild until one of the elderly parishioners passed away and his wife told me later that he had a list of the Guild members, but she had thrown it out with other papers. I felt it was a significant loss to First Parish's history.

In 1957, Rusty Wheeler constructed a series of gears that could be connected to both of the clock weights, and they could be wound at the same time with an electric motor. At that point, the weekly task of winding the clock became a job for the sexton.

Our E. Howard clock is in excellent condition with all of its original paint and decoration intact. About every-other year we have David Graf from Kittery, Maine, our clock specialist, come by to oil and check the clock. This year, Bruce Davidson, our new Facilities Manager, had David come by to service and adjust the hands of the clock. The pins were removed to each clock face, so all the hands to the clock could be set to the exact minute. With proper maintenance, our clock will run beautifully for another hundred years or more.

5. Beetles in the Belfry

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: Has the church building ever had issues of insect infestations?

Every time the steeple has been repaired & painted, the contractors have examined the timbers and found no beetle activity. Evidently, there was some Powder-Post Beetle activity in the past, but nothing is obvious at present.

6. Green Linoleum

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What kind of flooring was installed during the renovation?

The “green” linoleum (“eco-green” linoleum, also known by the brand name Marmoleum) was installed in the nursery school, church restrooms and kitchen during the renovations of 2007 to 2011. It is a product that has been made with linseed oil and other organic compounds. No oil or other toxic fossil fuel products are used in its manufacture. The advantage is that it does not need to have a wax finish; thus, there is no stripping or waxing needed every year.

One issue with the product is that it fades when light is shown on it, so it will fade around the furniture, leaving a dark area when the furniture is moved. We were not informed about a second problem with Marmoleum, which is if there is standing water left on the product for several hours, the Marmoleum will turn black. The black stain cannot be removed once it is set. We had a problem with staining on a 2-foot square of the kitchen floor, and several problem areas in the nursery school. One problem was beside the nursery school toilet (as you might imagine). The other problem was under a doormat inside a new door to the nursery school office. Parents seeing the black stains automatically assume it is mold.

Having a contractor cut out the damaged Marmoleum and replace it has been next to impossible. No flooring contractor would touch the project because Marmoleum has to be heated with a special tool to make a level connection. The replacement piece would not match the faded original installation. Only one contractor made an estimate for a suggested solution. He proposed the removal of all the Marmoleum and replacing it at a cost of 14 thousand

dollars. First Parish has not decided upon repairing or replacing the Marmoleum at present; the search continues.

7. Communion Silver

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What's the story about the Communion Silver?

When the Puritans arrived in New England, they didn't see themselves as exiles from England. They saw themselves as part of a Calvinist global movement. Governor Winthrop said they were, "a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." They believed their calling was to purify the Anglican Church. To purify the church, they had developed very precise opinions about communion, which was one of only three sacraments they kept from the Anglican Church.

The Puritans believed that rather than people approaching a rail to take communion individually, the whole family should take communion together in their pew. They reasoned that there should be nothing secret or separate about communion. To that end, the Deacons of the church sat directly below and in front of the pulpit looking out at the congregation. When communion was to be served, the Deacons lowered a small folding table from the back of their pew, and took the bread and cup out to the congregation.

In our present Sanctuary there is a table that often sits below and in front of the pulpit and frequently has flower arrangements on it. It is not just a flower table, but is the heir to that small fold-down communion table. And the Deacons still take the communion bread and cup to the congregation seated in their pews.

There is no scriptural reference to how often communion should be taken, so different congregations have adopted times that varied from quarterly, to every-other month or more, there was no consistency to the frequency of communion. First Parish in Concord serves communion once a year on Maundy Thursday, which commemorates the (Mondatum Novum) New Mandate, or the new commandment (John 15:12), when Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Our service is a service of remembrance of all the people that have come before us and were an important part of our lives.

The Communion Silver that First Parish owns and uses reflects the attempt to separate from the ornate chalices used in Anglican and Catholic services. The six earliest pieces are two-handed caudle cups. In the 17th century, “caudle” was a common drink made from grain gruel, spices, sugar and alcohol. It was served hot, thus the need for two handles. Many people had caudle cups in their homes made from wood or ceramic or pewter, but not silver. Using a caudle cup for communion would be the same as a common coffee mug today. This was a movement away from the use of ornate chalices and “sacred” items that were used in the Catholic and Anglican churches.

First Parish’s earliest communion service has six caudle cups made by John Coney (1655-1722). John Coney taught Paul Revere’s father the art of silversmithing.

There is one “can,” which we would call a small tankard, that was made by Jacob Hurd (1702-1758).

There are also six silver beaker cups and two large flagons made by Samuel Bartlett (1752-1821).

For the first few years I was working at First Parish, Harvey Wheeler (a Deacon) and I would retrieve the communion silver from a local bank where it resided throughout the year. We would pick up the silver the morning of Maundy Thursday and take it to my apartment (on Church Green) where I stayed with it until it was time to prepare the Sanctuary for the evening service. After the service, I would take the silver back to my apartment where it would stay until the next morning. On Friday morning, Harvey and I would then return the silver to the bank vault.

Eric Parkman Smith, a Deacon, retired from his employment and was thus able to take over duties from Harvey Wheeler. Eric and I brought the silver to the Meeting House for over twenty years.

In 1992, The Concord Museum requested a loan of the Communion Silver to be displayed on a five-year renewal agreement. Eric and I would pick-up the silver from the museum and return it that same evening through the generous “off hours” agreement of David Wood (Museum Curator). There is a short video of Eric and me retrieving the Communion Silver and setting it up for the communion service. That video can be viewed by going to First Parish’s website at the “history listing” under the “About” tab.

It has been my distinct honor to retrieve and set-up the beautiful communion service of First Parish with the Deacons and the Ministers for the past forty years.

Addendum 1: Communion Silver

There are two questions that remain for me to do more research concerning First Parish's Communion Silver.

1) There is a story that has come down through history that during the occupation of Concord by British troops in April 19, 1775, the Communion Silver was hidden in a barrel of soap in the Wright Tavern. The tavern master at that time was Amos Wright. His wife had just made a barrel of soap. In order to keep the church silver out of the hands of British soldiers, Mrs. Wright plunged the silver into a barrel of soap for safe keeping. After the occupation, it is reported that the ladies of the Church had great difficulty cleaning oxidation off of the silver.

Why was the Communion Silver in the Wright Tavern? The Tavern was a public building with many people passing through at different hours. The Tavern was also heated by open fireplaces, and candles and lanterns were the only light source. The risk of fire would have been very great.

There is a competing story about the communion silver being in the Wright Tavern and placed in a barrel of soap. It comes from a history of The Robinson Family Genealogical and Historical Association. In the section 118, under the paragraph 10. On April 19, 1775, a woman by the name of Susannah Robinson gave a statement that is quoted in the history: "Later, when she (Mrs. Robinson) heard that the 'regulars' were coming, she went straight to the meeting house opposite her own house, took the communion plate, brought it home and hid it in her soft-soap barrel, in the arch under the great chimney, where it lay hid till the 'red coats' left Concord".

Eric Smith had told me that the Communion Silver was kept by the Deacons in their homes and passed to each other for safe keeping. So, why was the Communion Silver in the Tavern? Was Amos Wright also the sexton of the church? Was Amos about to set the silver up for communion in the Meeting House, but given the alarm, hurriedly gathered the silver and brought it to the Tavern next door for safe keeping?

2) One of the caudle cups is engraved with, "The Gift of M's Margaret Bridges of Finglas in Ireland to ye Church of Concord, April 6, 1676."

- Who was Margaret Bridges?
- Was she in New England?

- David Wood at the Concord Museum, believes the date of 1676 was when the donation was given, and the cup was made at a later date. John Coney would have been twenty-one years old in 1676, would he have been a master of silversmithing that early in his life?
- Were the funds originally intended to be used for Communion Silver? The year 1676 was the height of King Philip's War. During that time, many outlying families were retreating to communities closer to Boston for safety. Were the funds intended to help support those retreating families? Maybe the funds were not needed to support those displaced families and were later used to make a Communion Cup?

Addendum 2: Communion Silver

For most of my time at First Parish, the congregation has drunk from the same cup. As concern for hygiene developed, the Reverend Howard Dana changed the communion service. He instructed the congregation to dip the bread into the "wine" and then immediately consume the bread, instead of drinking from the cup. In the New Testament, Jesus is described as dipping the bread in the wine. This act is called intinction.

Also, for the forty years that I have served at First Parish, we have always used grape juice rather than real wine. Eric Parkman Smith said that, "If First Parish ever used real wine in Communion, he would leave the Church." We still use Welch's Grape Juice. (There would probably be serious protests if we used any other brand of grape juice here in Concord.)

8. Silver Pitcher

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What is the story about the silver pitcher?

First Parish owns a silver pitcher that is not a part of the Communion Service. Few parishioners know about it, and fewer still have ever seen it. It is referred to as: The Barzillai Frost Pitcher. It was given to the Reverend Barzillai upon his retirement in 1857, and the inscription on it reads as follows: "The ladies of the First Parish in Concord to Rev. B. Frost for twenty years their faithful and beloved Pastor Oct. 3rd 1857." The pitcher was returned to the church upon Reverend Frost's death. On the back of the pitcher is engraved: "Given by Mrs. Frost to the Parish for the use of its Ministers successively October 1891." The pitcher is now held by each senior minister and is then passed on. The pitcher is fourteen-and one-half inches tall and seven inches in diameter. The maker's mark reads: N Harding & Co. Boston.

9. Carvings on the Pulpit

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What thoughts do you have about the Sanctuary Pulpit?

When one stands in front of the First Parish Sanctuary facing the Pulpit and looks up, one will see a decorative scallop shell in the center of the arch. I suspect it was added purely as a decorative element as a part of Greek Revival Architecture and its original meaning may have been lost. However, in Western Art, the scallop shell was a symbol of a pilgrim on a journey, and a symbol for John the Baptist. In many paintings of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, John is using a scallop shell to pour the water over Jesus' head. In Matthew 3:3, John is described as "a voice crying in the wilderness." I like to think that at times the minister is truly a voice crying in the wilderness of the congregation.

The Sanctuary Pulpit also has a "mystery carving" on the left and right sides. Both carvings are identical. What are the carvings supposed to symbolize? I leave it to you to view the carvings and form your idea as to what you think they mean.

10. Houses on Church Green

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What is the story behind the houses that are part of church property?

There are three residential structures on "Church Green" that are owned by First Parish. One is of 17th century origin (White Cottage) and two others that date to the late 18th or very early 19th century. As would be expected with such old structures, constant maintenance on those houses is required. First Parish has preserved them very well.

The oldest house, (7 Church Green), is referred to as the White Cottage. It has some very fine details that have survived, such as a wonderful beehive oven and fireplace in the basement area, an unusual stairway from the basement to the first level and the first level to the second. The stairs are steep and wide, indicating there may have been ladders in those areas before stairs were added. It has beautiful wide pine boards in the floors and some evidence of brace framing. In what is the present dining area, there is evidence of a square hinged door in the

floor. In close proximity to that door, and in the crawl space area, is an abandoned and filled-in well. This door may have allowed the residents to access water from the well without leaving the house. There is a small walk-in kitchen area to the rear of the house, that may have been added by using an abandoned outhouse structure. Further detailed information about this house can be found in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Survey about this property. Assessor's number H9-9, area A, Form # 324, 11/16/1994. Short copies of the reports on all three houses can be found in a file located in the First Parish's Facilities Manager's office.

The next house on First Parish's property is 1 Church Green and is known as the Coan House. It is a plain structure, but the rear third of the house was added from another structure, probably in the early 19th century. Eric Parkman Smith told me a little about the last private owner to reside in the house. He said the man's name was John Coan, and he was a coachman for Eric's grandparents. Mr. Coan had purchased the house in 1918 and when his health deteriorated, he sold it to First Parish in 1931. Further information about the structure of the house can also be found in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Survey, assessor's number H9-9, area A, form 323, 11/16/1994.

The third house on Church Green is now separated into two apartments, number 23 is the apartment above and number 25 is the apartment below, they are both referred to as part of the Hosmer Wheelwright House, more recently known as the Thayer-Ball House. Nathan Hosmer had a wheelwright's shop in the lower level and it extended out to cover what is now the First Parish Herb Garden. In constructing the Herb Garden, I found an area which had been the forge for the wheelwright. It was an area with ashes and "clinkers" which come from working metal in high heat.

In the 1950s the lower level was turned into a separate apartment. When Roger Fenn (founder of Fenn School) retired, he and his wife moved into the newly constructed lower apartment. Roger paid for moving a window and installing a fireplace for the pleasure of him and his wife. Roger lived at 25 Church Green until the mid 1980s. Diana and I moved into the apartment after Roger Fenn. We spent about 35 years enjoying the fireplace, and the view of the Herb Garden. Further structural information can be obtained in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Survey, Assessor's number H9-9, area A, form 323, 11/16/1994.

Addendum 1: Houses on Church Green

During the early settlement of Concord, what is now Main Street was actually a dam. That dam was used for some simple industry, including a small mill, hence "Mill Dam." The area that is now Walden Street was flooded with the stream, that forced the early businesses to locate

along Lexington Road. Various craft people lived in the same building that their businesses were in.

About 1720, on Church Green and near the present garage, a large L-shaped structure was built. It started at the present garage location and went straight out to Lexington Road, and then turned right. Many businesses were located in it and it was eventually called, "the White Block."

After the Main Street dam was piped underground in the early 19th century, the businesses began to relocate there. The White Block eventually became tenement housing and by the end of the 19th century, First Parish bought it and tore it down. Photographs of the White Block are in the Concord Library, Special Collections.

Several summers ago, the part-time sextons and I were painting the garage. We had finished, and a couple of days later, the postman (who walks his route) came to me and asked, "What's that hole by the garage for?" I immediately investigated and found an open hole about three feet in diameter and about twelve feet deep. It was a well that had never been filled or properly covered! The inside of the well had beautiful stonework and I am sure it served the White Block. I can't imagine why any of us didn't fall into the well breaking a leg or worse! It appeared to be covered with soil clinging to the grass that covered the opening. I overlaid the opening with a large sheet of plywood and called our landscaper. The well is now filled with gravel and has become one of several abandoned wells and outhouses that probably contain rich archaeological treasures for the future.

11. Herb Garden

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

How did the herb garden come about?

W. H. Auden (one of the great American authors) tells us that there are three histories: the history that is spoken, the history that is written and the actual history that happened. With that in mind, I have been asked to review a little history of the Deborah Webster Greeley Herb Garden on the grounds of First Parish, so that memory and actuality are merged for posterity. The Herb Garden was dedicated in 1987 and it has been lovingly cared for by volunteers and funded mostly by the Women's Parish Association.

I had been considering construction of an herb garden somewhere on the grounds of First Parish for a long time. My great-grandfather was an herbalist in the Amish community in Ohio and my mother always believed that my interest in herbs came from him. But while having a casual conversation with Betty King in 1986, I learned that after the Reverend Dana Greeley's death, the Women's Parish Association was looking to honor Deborah in some way. Deborah was the silent supporting force behind all of Dana's accomplishments and international honors. The WPA wanted to specifically honor Deborah. Her mother was the celebrated, Helen Noyes Webster, one of the founding members of the American Herb Society. Helen wrote some early books about raising and using herbs and was acknowledged for helping revitalize Americans' interest in growing and using herbs. There was a small herb garden dedicated and maintained in memory of Helen Webster behind the Buckman Tavern in Lexington. Deborah herself was an accomplished herbalist and wrote several articles and lectured about herbs over many years. The WPA thought that the herb garden was a good idea and a nice way to honor Deborah. They agreed to furnish the initial funding for constructing the garden.

The WPA and I agreed that this should be a surprise for Deborah Greeley, so every effort was made to keep it secret. I informed Deborah that I had just come into some money (which was the truth) and I needed her help in designing an herb garden; it was all so confusing to me. Deborah fell for it, hook-line-and sinker. So, while there was still snow on the ground, early in 1987, Deborah and I walked out the size of the garden and placed sticks in the snow to show the general size and design. As the weather warmed in the spring, Deborah and I were in constant contact about the type of herbs to be planted and the size of the boxes. She decided upon four boxes surrounded by a circle and with an intersecting walkway, with an armillary sundial mounted on a post in the center of the garden. The four theme boxes included one containing biblical herbs, one containing culinary herbs, one with fragrant herbs and one with decorative herbs. Deborah found it a little confusing when I presented her with samples of different colored bricks to choose for the pathway. She said, "This is your garden. What do you want?" I told her that I trusted her aesthetic taste in such matters. (I was still able to keep it a secret.) She designed her own herb garden without even knowing it!

A very secret mailing went out to the congregation explaining about the herb garden and that it was to be a surprise. On the appointed Sunday after service, everyone was invited to the garden for the dedication. At the end of the service, Deborah was going to leave for home without coming to the coffee hour, when friends had to persuade her to attend the coffee hour being held outside. Much to everyone's relief, the garden had remained a surprise and Deborah was overwhelmingly thrilled when the small mounted plaque dedicating the garden to her was unveiled.

Deborah was able to help with much of the annual maintenance in the herb garden over the years and would often remark, “It was so nice to have something like this dedicated to me while I am still alive and could appreciate it.” Over the years we had a few Victorian Teas at the herb garden (where everyone dressed in Victorian clothing) to raise funds for the garden’s annual maintenance, and I have raffled several paintings to also supply funding. But now the funds are annually provided by the WPA, and the armillary sundial is being used as their official committee symbol. There is a small collection of herb-related books in the Pastoral Care Library, that anyone may borrow by signing them out. Many of those books are specific to growing different herbs, and many provide possible garden designs and herbal recipes. A number of photos from the Victorian Teas have been kept in an album that anyone is welcome to view. The photo album is presently in the Facilities Manager’s office. There are also a couple of videos that were made of the Teas that show parishioners that were present for the festivities, many of whom are no longer with us.

12. Green Grass

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What is wrong with First Parish’s lawn?

I was hearing that from parishioners more and more frequently.

In the year 2007, we embarked upon a major renovation to the First Parish Meeting House and its surrounding grounds. Because the renovations were so extensive, we were required to install new sewer lines, water supply lines, stormceptors, catch-basins and siltation tanks in the ground. Once those items were addressed, granite curbing, new driveways and walkways were installed, along with new landscaping plants, a new lawn and an irrigation system which was installed to make sure all the new plantings became well established. The irrigation system was expensive to install and was intended to last only 2 to 3 years; and then it was to be abandoned. It was also decided that in order to be more “green” and contribute to the Green Sanctuary Accreditation of the UUA, Eco Grass (fescue grass) was planted rather than the usual grass seed. It came with the promise of having deeper roots, thus, less water needed, less fertilizer and requiring virtually no chemicals for a robust and beautiful lawn. Unfortunately, it did not work quite as planned. One important fact about fescue grass was not explained to us. Fescue grass takes a long time to establish itself. During that time the lawn is subject to weeds. Apparently, we were supposed to be on our hands and knees removing any weeds so the grass would be able to get established. With the size of the First Parish lawn, it would have been impossible to do all that weeding. The alternative to manual weeding was to use toxic

herbicides. We were caught in a difficult position for two major reasons; the Mill Dam stream runs through our property and we have the Mill Dam Nursery School on site. The Natural Resources Commission and the Nursery School place very restrictive guidelines upon any use of granular herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer used on site. In addition, trying to keep people off the grounds, which is a large public space, while the lawn is being restored, seems unattainable and probably unreasonable. So, we are left with patches of grass destroyed by grubs, scorching sun and an abundance of crabgrass and dandelions that die back in the winter leaving patches resembling the Gobi Desert. This became our new normal. On the bright side, it had been mentioned to me (by a prominent New England clergyman) that dandelions are loved by honeybees.

Thanks to a generous donation of a parishioner, we were able to completely restore our lawn irrigation system that provides water to the front and side-lawns of the Meeting House. After the restoration of the irrigation system, we engaged Simply Safer Lawn Care to aerate the lawn and over-seed the irrigated areas. They also placed a spread of winterized, low nitrogen, non-toxic fertilizer. The special aspect about Simply Safer is that all the materials placed on our lawns are organic and have no man-made toxic chemicals. All the products are non-toxic to humans and pets, and do not contribute toxic runoff to the Mill Dam stream. Also, it must be made clear that in the end, we will not have a “golf course lawn.” By using Simply Safer Lawn Care Products, it will take longer to realize a lawn that looks better, although it may not be the lush lawn that it once was. Having a nursery school on site, and RE children here on Sundays, plus our commitment to the UUA Green Sanctuary accreditation, it is the only course to follow as we try to contribute to a better environment for everyone.

13. Door Damage

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What’s the story pertaining to the missing Door Panel?

If one faces the Sanctuary Organ while standing on the balcony in the Sanctuary, and looks to the left of the organ, there is a door. That door opens to the stairs that leads up and into the steeple. That door has been missing a molded matching lower panel, and was replaced with a painted piece of plywood many years before my arrival at First Parish.

During the summer of 2019, Bob Hoff (one of the part-time sextons) came into the sexton’s office and informed me that a man wished to speak with me. Bob brought the visitor in and he

looked to be in his middle fifties. He introduced himself (I have intentionally forgotten his name) and then he began to explain. As a young person, he began abusing drugs and alcohol. He said that he was presently in a recovery program, and a part of the program was that it required him to search out people he hurt and abused. He was to apologize and ask their forgiveness for any damage or abuse he had caused. I listened carefully as he described how he and others broke into the Meeting House and damaged the door to the steeple in order to get to the bell deck. Once on the bell deck they yelled at people passing by and threw things over the side to smash apart on the drive below. As his account came to an end, he apologized and asked forgiveness for his actions and the destruction of the door. I asked if he needed forgiveness in the form of a letter or some other way? He said no, forgiveness by the spoken word would be enough. No Ministers or the Director of Operations were present, so I said that because of my position as Facilities Manager of First Parish, I felt that I had the authority to forgive him. He accepted that statement and we shook hands. I complimented his courage and honesty, but I had one other question, did he and his friends paint their initials, dates and names on the inside of the bell? He was evasive about that, so I dropped the question.

Those initials, dates and names are still there on the inside of the bell. I do not recognize many of the initials, names and dates, but there is one full name that I do recognize. That person was a long-time member, and a highly respected person, who has since passed away. I will not reveal that person's name, but if you want to examine the dates and names yourself, ask the Facilities Manager to take you up to the bell.

14. Reconstruction

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: What are some of the stories pertaining to the renovation of the Meeting House that occurred 2007-2011?

As the First Parish's congregation grew in the late 1990s and early 2000s, more and more programs were added to the church's busy schedule. Before I retired from my position at First Parish, there were an average of 1500 listed meetings annually on the church schedule and that number of functions did not list all the Religious Education classes. A major renovation of the Meeting House was needed to add new space and bring the facility up to current standards and codes of safety and to make it accessible for the handicapped.

A capital campaign was developed and beginning in 2007, design work began. Some of the issues that were to be addressed were: the landscape, the infrastructure related to new water supply and sewer lines, catch basins, siltation tanks, ventilation, modern safety standards, electrical upgrades, new meeting space, new office space and structural issues.

One of the most important issues that was addressed, was bringing the ministers back into the Meeting House. For several years, the ministers had been using space in the Wright Tavern for their offices.

The architects that were chosen for the renovation were, *Taylor & Burns of Boston*, and the contractors were, *Enterprises of Danvers*. As a part of this writing, I would like to address some of the items listed above, with short comments.

Photograph No. 1
RE Wing in mid 1900's



Photograph No. 2
RE Wing demolished in 2008



Photograph No. 3 – RE wing today



Space:

The new design for the Meeting House involved building up instead of out, thus the “footprint” of the Meeting House would remain the same. First Parish is located in the flood zone of the Mill Dam which is supervised and controlled by the Natural Resources Commission. Any footprint created to a building being constructed in a flood zone requires that compensation space be dug to “compensate” for the new construction. So, what that means is that if you build a new structure with a foundation, and there is a flood, the new foundation space would raise the level of flooding, causing damage to adjacent areas. Since First Parish kept the same footprint in the new construction, we did not have to dig compensation space on our property. We built the new structure between the chapel and the older part of the building, thus adding a new story to the Religious Education wing for additional space.

The Original square footage of the Meeting House was 25,920 square feet, and it was increased to 30,080 square feet. We gained 4,160 square feet of mostly meeting space.

The Mill Dam Nursery School used the lower basement space which had four classrooms, an office, and restrooms. The restrooms were completely renovated. The office space was painted and had the floor replaced. New windows were also installed. The two rooms at the south end were kept nearly the same, but with floor replacement. It is worth mentioning that most of the floor tiles that were removed were asbestos tiles, increasing construction costs.

The second floor (above the nursery school) was used for the Religious Education program, and was reconfigured, with one large classroom and two minister’s offices, all with air conditioning. In addition, a small theatre room and an open space student minister’s office were created. The large classroom was named the Brooks Room and the small theatre room was named the Bulkeley Room.

The new third floor space was configured into one large meeting space and two smaller classroom spaces. The largest room was named the Emerson Room and the two smaller classrooms were named the Greeley Room and the Ripley Room.

How the rooms were named:

As the renovation construction was drawing to an end, the question about names came up. The Standing Committee at that time did not want to be responsible for naming the rooms, so

it was passed to the ministers. Eventually, the ministers did not want the responsibility, so it was passed to me.

I realized that the previous rooms had been named after men, as well as were most of the portraits of ministers hanging in the Parish Hall and Parlor. I was also aware that there was growing criticism of those, “old dead white men,” whose fame dominated our Meeting House. I saw this as an opportunity to correct an obvious gender bias. So, I named the largest new meeting space the Emerson Room, after Ellen Emerson, the daughter of Ralph Waldo. Most people expect that the room was named for the transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo, and so they are a little stunned to see the portrait of Ellen Emerson hanging in the room. Ellen was a Sunday school teacher at First Parish for forty years! I thought some recognition was due. Also, the Women’s Parish Association (WPA) has provided additional funding to furnish the Emerson Room. The WPA considers the Emerson Room as their primary meeting space.

I took the same approach to naming the second largest meeting space, the Brooks Room. Mary Merrick Brooks was a member in the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Concord. She was part of the society when in 1864, they wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln (signed by 195 Concord children) asking President Lincoln to free all slave children. It seems fitting to give her an honorary place in our Meeting House.

Landscape:

Some of the landscape renovations were discussed previously about the lawn. But other items included a reconfiguration of the driveways to the houses, and granite curbing installed along the edge of the front driveway. Before the curbing was added, there were a wide variety of large and small mud holes along the edge. It made it difficult for drivers to enter and exit their vehicles during inclement weather.

A major part of the landscape work was the addition of several underground leaching chambers and catch basins, which were placed all around the property. The theory is that any rain falling on the roof of the Meeting House and most of the grounds will be caught before draining into the Mill Dam stream, thus capturing most pollutants.

Also, we were required by the Concord Conservation Commission to remove any invasive plant species from both sides of the Mill Dam stream and plant a series of native species in their place. There is a map in the Facilities Manager’s office that shows what plants were planted and their locations. Each year we are still required to have a licensed arborist remove any invasive species from each side of the Mill Dam.

Elevator:

In the 1980s First Parish received a variance to install a “home elevator.” So, the elevator was placed in the area off the Sanctuary exit doors which are next to the pulpit. This allowed for a wide staircase to be built coming down to ground floor from the Sanctuary in that same area.

During the renovations of 2007-2011, a new and larger elevator was required, which resulted in the staircase being narrowed in order to keep the same footprint of the building. Also, to install the new larger commercial elevator, the electrical service to the Meeting House needed to be upgraded to 800 AMPs.

Foundation: Corner of the Meeting House

With the excavation and the narrowing of the stairway that attached to the older part of the Sanctuary, a major problem was discovered. The corner of the Meeting House at the stair connection was resting on rubble (nothing substantial). This situation required the insertion of structural “needles,” which were driven under that corner of the building and then concrete was pumped into that part of the foundation. This was an unexpected expense of over thirty thousand dollars. As the renovation progressed, the type of elevator was changed from a hydraulic system to a belt driven system. That change freed up the lower room (under the stairs) that was constructed for a pump room and the hydraulic controls. As a result, the room under the stairs could be used for storage space. The new space for storage was welcomed and soon filled with paper products, stored documents, window air conditioners, Open Table supply carts, and a box of architectural plans for the Meeting House.

Over the next few years, a leak into the storage room developed and then increased. The leak was most noticeable in the winter, when outside, at ground level, the soil was frozen. Heat in the building would thaw the ground at the foundation. If there was a warm rain, the water could not go out into the lawn so it found a way into the lower storage room. During those times, I had large trash cans situated under the leaks. At times the water flowed quite heavily, to waterfall proportions! At that point, I would keep moving a portable sump pump to direct the water across the room to a permanent sump pump in the floor. It turned out that part of the new foundation under the new stairs had separated, allowing water to enter the storage room.

In 2020, as soon as weather would permit, the company for whom Richard Keleher (a parishioner) works, *The Thompson & Lichtner Company*, ran tests, and determined the scope of the leak and engaged a contractor. The solution was to excavate outside, install a rubber sheet about 18 inches below grade and affixed to the foundation to direct water away, assisted

by a perforated pipe on top of the membrane directing water to the adjacent area drain. The interior of the foundation was then waterproofed.

Pergola / Patio:

As a part of the 2007 to 2011 renovation of the Meeting House, a pergola was built over what became the Kerestur Terrace. Over the few years since it's construction, we have seen the horizontal supports under the roof of the Pergola begin to deteriorate at the ends. They deteriorated to the extent that mushrooms were growing on them. It has been determined that the flat rubber roof had leaks. With time the leaks became more and more evident. This suggests that the roof may need to be completely removed and probably replaced at some point. In the meantime, Barry Copp (a long-time and devoted parishioner) came up with the idea of cutting off the ends of the purlins (the cross-support beams) that stick out from under the roof. He then manufactured new ends for the purlins from a composite material that looks like painted wood. This matched the original purlin ends, and by using this substance, the exposed ends will be resistant to rot. We called them prosthetic purlin ends.

Hallway Under the Sanctuary:

There were several reconfigurations of the spaces in the lower hallway. Offices were switched, restrooms were renovated and improved with a new handicapped restroom. All of the spaces were required by law to have ventilation. The hallway has a very low ceiling so all the new utilities had to be run through a trench which was dug the full length of the lower hallway. What follows is my recollection of an event, which I noted for the 2009 Annual Report.

On a Tuesday morning in August of 2009, John Clemenzi (our contractor's site supervisor) came to me and asked a question concerning the soil under the Meeting House. John wanted to know why the soil had been leveled after the fire of 1900 and what was put down as a base that discolored the soil. I had a hunch, but really didn't know what he was talking about.

The contractor had dug the needed trench down the center of the lower hallway in order to bury the new utility, plumbing and ventilation lines. John and I walked to the trench and as soon as I saw it, I knew what it was. About eighteen inches down in the soil strata was a black line about three inches thick, which obviously ran under the entire old part of the Meeting House. A sense of awe, humility and responsibility came over me as I stood looking at the trench and realized that the black line was the ashen remains from that devastating fire which completely destroyed the Meeting House. No one had seen this ash level in more than one hundred years.

Photograph No. 4 - Trench under the floor of the lower hall



Photograph No. 5 - Ash deposit from the fire of 1900



One little treasure I retrieved from the ashen layer was a brick from the 1841 construction. That brick now resides in the Facilities Manager's office.

15. Recorded Interviews of Parishioners

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

Question: Are there any recorded interviews of Parishioners for the sake of First Parish history?

In 1979 (one year before I arrived at First Parish) the Reverend Dana Greeley and the Reverend Jim Robinson interviewed an elderly parishioner named Elmer Joslin. Mr. Joslin was 89 years old at the time of the interview and was 9 years old when he witnessed the Meeting House burn in 1900. That interview was captured on a cassette tape and was handed to me to allow other parishioners to borrow it. Over the years, a few people borrowed the tape, and then as CDs became the mode of recording and listening, fewer and fewer people borrowed the tape. Also, my wife Diana and I had recorded a few interviews of elderly parishioners when we had them over to our apartment for dinner. One important person we interviewed was Roger Fenn; he was a widower and founder of the Fenn School. Roger lived next to us, and we tried to have him to dinner once a week for a home-cooked meal.

With the advent of CDs and the decline of cassettes being used for recording and listening, we placed the tapes in storage. The tapes were ignored for several years until a question was asked in a Sunday morning forum relative to the tragic burning of the Meeting House in 1900. I mentioned that I had a cassette recording of Elmer Joslin describing his experience watching the Meeting House burn in 1900, when he was nine years old. When I retrieved the container in which the cassette tapes were stored, the Joslin tape was not there! I searched and searched, but to no avail. Eventually, I decided that I must have loaned it out to a parishioner and failed to keep a record of the person to whom I'd loaned it. Needless to say, I have felt terrible for nearly thirty years! Losing such an important and valuable piece of First Parish's oral history has weighed heavily on my mind.

When I retired from First Parish over a year ago, I thought that I would like to have the cassette tapes of the interviews transferred to CDs to preserve them for the future. It has not been an easy process of finding a source that I trusted and would carefully transfer the tapes. A good friend in California, Gabriel Sand (an electronics genius) has been making suggestions of where I might go to make the transfer of the tapes to CDs. It was suggested that a parishioner, Stoney Ballard, might know. Meanwhile, as a matter of expedience, we found a source online that sold new small/portable cassette players. I had no idea that one could still purchase a cassette player...especially a new one. We purchased one of the players so we could at least

listen to the tapes and prioritize or eliminate some of the tapes that might be damaged or of little consequence.

There were several cassette tapes in the storage container when I opened it. Some of the tapes were blank, never having been used for recordings. I didn't have much hope that there would be anything on the blank tapes (tapes with no label) but I played the blank tapes for a few minutes anyway, then removed them from the player. The last blank tape looked in very good condition. It had no label. I put it in the machine and pressed play. Suddenly, I heard the voice of the Reverend Dana Greeley and the Reverend Jim Robinson introducing Elmer Joslin and explaining why they were interviewing him. As my breathing stopped, my mouth agape, and chills running down my spine, I thought OMG! This is the tape! This is the tape that I've felt so terrible about losing for over thirty years! The interview was taped over a recording of music, but the recording of the interview is very clear and there is no breakthrough with any of the music. The music is only heard when the interview of Elmer Joslin has finished.

During the interview with Elmer, he becomes very emotional as he describes watching the Meeting House burn. For anyone who listens to the tape, it brings tears, as it does to Elmer in the recording. He very much loved the old Meeting House.

Thanks to Stoney Ballard, who "cleaned up" the tape and placed it on First Parish's website.

Roger Fenn

When Diana and I arrived at First Parish in 1980, we lived at #1 Church Green. Roger Fenn was living at #25 Church Green, and a widower for several years. We tried to have him up to #1, at least once a week, for a home-cooked meal. In 1984, when we had him to our apartment for one of those meals, I recorded an interview of him about his life, on a cassette tape.

During the interview, Roger described his brothers and sisters and how they lived on the Harvard Campus because his father was a professor of religion. Roger recalled a funny story about playing football during a lecture that was taking place next to where they were playing. He also described his experiences while serving in the Army during World War One. And, most importantly, how he and his wife conceived of starting a school and how they would present a philosophy of teaching. He also explained how they raised the funds to purchase land and the sources of financing for such a large endeavor as Fenn School. Roger also described his own personal concepts and practices related to the Christian Religion, Unitarianism and his thoughts about the teachings of Jesus.

It is a delightful tape with Roger's dry sense of humor and an important oral history of Concord and Fenn School. The tape runs for both sides of the cassette tape, about 1-1/2 hours.

The videos and recordings referenced above can be viewed by going to First Parish's website at the "history listing" under the "About" tab.

16. Surviving the Fire of 1900

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

An important part of First Parish's architectural history that should not be lost has to do with a small porch that was located near the rear, and to the side of, the Meeting House.

Photograph No. 6 - The porch before the fire (at far right)



The structure of that porch actually survived the fire, and was subsequently removed to be installed on the front of a house on Route 117, near Nine Acre Corner.

Photograph No. 7 - The porch installed on the house on route 117



This story was told to Reverend Dana Greeley and Reverend Jim Robinson during the recording of 1979. Later, after the interview, Reverend Dana Greeley took Elmer out to route 117 and identified the house that he had been talking about. These photographs confirm Elmer's story.

17. In Conclusion:

Drafted by Doug Baker, Sexton and Curator from 1980 - 2020

In these reminiscences I have made an attempt to not dwell on all the challenges that many projects presented while working at First Parish. I could not have found a better place to work over all the years. It is humbling to remember all the wonderful people I have met during this journey. Nowhere would I have found so many people that are as intelligent, kind and generous as in the congregation of First Parish in Concord. I have had the good fortune of working with an amazing and talented staff, and the most responsible and competent assistant sextons I could ever dream of working with! But the pain comes when so many of the congregation I have come to know leave for various reasons, moving to new jobs, moving to retire, and yes, many who have passed away.

At first, for me, First Parish was simply a place of employment. I planned to move on once anchored in New England. But the church became more than a place to work, it offered a liberal community and became a spiritual home. I stayed employed for forty years.

In closing, I would like to quote from Reverend Lorin MacDonald (served 1895-1924). After the devastating fire that destroyed the Meeting House in April of 1900, he delivered a dedication sermon for the newly rebuilt building in October of 1901. In that address, he charged the congregation with this:

“How much out of the real substance of your lives, not only your material wealth, but the wealth of your thought, your heart, your time, your very souls, how much of yourselves are you willing to give in order that this old church should go on shedding on your own and the lives of others its light and joy and comfort?”

18. Open Table: Summary of history, evolution and current challenges

Summary of Open Table’s history, evolution and current challenges

Based on an interview with Nancy Shohet West by Jeanine Calabria

August 26, 2020

Open Table began in 1989 by providing a community meal to anyone who wished to attend. Its founders were two members of First Parish in Concord, Margie Goud Patterson and Robin

Tardo. While participating in a local Crop Walk, which is an event organized nationally to raise money both for food relief internationally and for local food relief organizations, the two women learned that Concord did not have its own dedicated food relief center. And so, they set out to fill that need. Working with seed money from the Concord Country Club and a large group of interested local citizens who responded to an ad in the *Concord Journal*, the organization was launched.

The name was important to the founders. By “open,” they envisioned establishing a weekly community dinner that would attract all manner of people. Harkening back to the 18th-century model of Concord that Thoreau so often described, they imagined farmers, statesmen, scholars and landowners – or their modern-day analogs – sitting side by side for a group dinner and conversation. In the middle of each table would be a coffee can, into which guests could deposit whatever contribution they chose.

After the weekly community dinners had been underway for about six months, it became clear to the organizers that one meal a week simply didn’t meet the needs for food relief that some families had. So, groceries were distributed after the meal in the form of packed bags and farmer’s market style produce offerings supplied by Gaining Ground. For over 30 years, the program served 70-100 people weekly. When storage for the groceries became too great for the church space, the town of Concord provided a basement space on Everett Street where canned goods could be collected, date checked and stored.

Both operations – the dinner and the pantry – took place at First Parish in Concord in the Parish Hall. Though many First Parish members volunteered at Open Table, the program was not considered a part of the First Parish’s Social Action Council’s programs. The church generously hosted the dinner weekly for over 30 years with the stipulation that Open Table cover the cost of the sextons who acted as parking attendants and oversaw the set up and tear down of tables and clean-up of the facility. The long lines outside the door of clients waiting to enter, the wear and tear on the church and the scheduling conflicts made the program at times an inconvenience to the church rather than an asset. Though if pressed, many First Parish members expressed their support that the church be used to serve those in need in this way and recognized that it was the most racially and culturally diverse group at the church during the week.

But as much as First Parish in Concord had been instrumental in the successful operation, it wasn’t an ideal location, for several reasons. Foremost was that the whole Open Table operation was extremely labor intensive due to having to fit so much activity into a short period of time. All of the setup and all of the breakdown had to happen within the space of a few

hours. As the program began to offer a wider array of perishable foods, the need for a permanent home with refrigeration became critical. In addition, it required a huge effort from a large number of volunteers to set up the weekly program and doing so became more and more logistically complex to deliver a successful program. The Open Table Board of Directors worked very hard for several years to identify a new permanent home in Concord but eventually gave up and instead acquired a permanent location in Maynard that continues to serve as the center of the thriving non-profit. The pandemic of 2020 served as a catalyst to close the dinner program at First Parish that had been less and less well attended in recent years with the separation of the pantry component from the meal. Open Table now prepares over 800 frozen meals a week which are distributed thru all pantry programs it operates.

During the first year of the pandemic, First Parish partnered with Open Table by providing the church parking area to host a mobile pantry program for Concord and Carlisle residents. Today, many First Parish members continue to volunteer with Open Table in Maynard and the only remnants of the 30 + years at the church are the frozen prepared meals that Open Table supplies the parish for those experiencing short-term health crisis or other needs for meal support.

19. About the organs at First Parish...

By D. Eric Huenneke, Parish Organist

First Parish in Concord has two organs. The Sanctuary organ is a 3 manual and pedal pipe organ of nearly 3,000 pipes, completed in 2016 by Russell & Company, Organ Builders in Vermont. When the church added a side wing and Chapel in the late 1950s, the 2 manual, 4 rank Estey pipe organ was installed in its Chapel shortly thereafter.

The original organ at the First Parish meeting house Sanctuary was Opus 54 of the Austin Organ Company in Hartford, Connecticut, dating from 1902. It was quite similar to many Austin organs of its size and tonal resources, basically adapted to fit within the space allotted for an organ in the newly rebuilt sanctuary, following the devastating fire which leveled the previous church in 1900. A few ranks of pipes (flutes, reeds) were replaced with new sounds and a new console installed by E.M. Skinner & Son in 1937. In the mid- 1970s, an additional 9 or 10 ranks of organ pipes were squeezed into the already tight pipe chambers. This was mainly to give the organ the added sounds needed to play Baroque music more effectively.

During the 1980s various consultations began on the best way to solve the many issues plaguing the First Parish organ. It quickly became apparent to several organists who played the instrument that the preceding additions were basically insensitive to the overall tonal blend, while a succession of organ technicians complained bitterly about the difficulty of maintaining an organ crammed into such a limited space by nature of its original design and layout. Therefore, by the late 1990s, an Organ Study Committee had been formed and made a recommendation that the best solution would be to replace the instrument entirely with a new organ.

By 2008, when a contract was finally signed for a new organ with Russell & Company, pipe organ builders of Cambridgeport, Vermont, there had been an additional three organ committees, which further consulted with various organ builders for their ideas/proposals. The charge was to retain the best useable pipework and the façade from the old instrument and incorporate it into a newly designed instrument for the space.

While it took until 2016 to complete the new organ with its beautiful moveable solid walnut console stained to match the pulpit installed on the ground floor, it was well worth waiting for. There were a handful of reasons for the delay in finishing the instrument, the chief one being the early realization that very little pipework from the old organ was suitable for reuse in the new instrument. Much of the old pipework had gone through a lot of trauma through alterations over the decades and was no longer useful in building a quality musical instrument, but rather was melted down for recycling. This meant that in order to complete the organ as designed, much more new pipework would need to be created by the builder. Basically, Russell & Co. was willing to do this without changing the contract price if the church was willing to wait longer, while they also continued to work on other contracts. This was a quite generous concession toward the church in helping them achieve their new organ dream and goal.

The end result is a beautiful instrument which includes a full complement of sounds in each of its four divisions and includes many attributes of both the symphonic and American classic organs built over the course of the 20th century. It has been heard satisfyingly playing everything from pre-Bach to 21st century church music, as well as theater music and symphonic transcriptions. About 20% of the pipework for the 2016 organ is from significant 20th century vintage builders, such as Casavant Frères, Austin, and E.M. Skinner, while the bodies of some of the larger newly created pipes were made from recycled pipe alloys of the former instrument. The organ also includes large wooden pipes in the pedal division from the former Austin organ. Of special note is the Tuba Harmonique in the choir division. It is a vintage E.M. Skinner rank of pipes, purchased by the organ builder many years ago from the former Capitol Theater in Boston before demolition. It is winded by a separate dedicated blower on

12” of air, rather than the 4” that the rest of the organ runs on. The former E.M. Skinner organ console was rebuilt, retrofitted, refinished, and retained in the rear Gallery to the right of the pipe façade for use in ensembles or choral events in the balcony when needed. In the end, the Russell & Company organ supports First Parish’s green philosophy of recycling and building for a future based solidly on the best of our past heritage.

Russell & Company’s Opus 54 (coincidentally the same opus number for them as the former Austin Organ company), contains 46 ranks of pipes over 3 manuals and a pedal keyboard, played with the feet. It is run by a solid-state system by Classic Organ Works of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada with 250 levels of memory, enabling the ease of saving the work of multiple organists for multiple services and events. There is also a Midi system in the main console, which is capable of capturing and playing back specific music live that was previously recorded by the organist. This Russell & Company organ is expected to stand the test of time with regular maintenance and tuning and should provide excellent music for many years to come.

20. History of the Labyrinth at First Parish in Concord

Darien N. Smith, Chair of the Labyrinth Committee

With contributions by Irl Smith, member of the committee

Darien Smith:

Background:

The labyrinth at First Parish goes back to the 1990s when parishioner Beth Dawson first brought the concept to our congregation. She introduced the idea and how to use the labyrinth for meditation, and she and husband Dave Dawson used a line marker to “paint” a white 7-circuit Cretan style labyrinth on the grass in the courtyard surrounded by the sanctuary, RE wing, and cottages. It quickly became popular for use by the Women’s Goddess Covenant Circle along with various other parishioners, young and old alike, individually, and in groups. For a number of years, this temporary labyrinth was re-lined every so often to keep it visible and in use. Eventually, the idea came up to make a more permanent labyrinth in that space. Beth and Dave Dawson put out the call for bricks to be donated by parishioners and enough bricks were collected to make the structure. Beth and Dave oversaw the construction, which involved digging trenches for the bricks that would serve as the lines in the grass. Over several days, many parishioners and some local Boy Scouts helped dig the trenches, line them with

sand, then place the bricks, then fill in around them with more sand, and our new labyrinth with brick lines and grass paths was finished!

Over time, with winter freezing and thawing, the bricks would work loose or become uneven and several times a team would work on re-digging and evening them out again. Also, the grass paths became mostly dirt and interested parishioners began to wonder if a better and more sustainable structure could be built. In the mid-2000s there was a capital campaign for major re-furbishing of various parts of the church building and to completely replace the RE and office wing. When the new project was about to begin, the Women's Goddess Covenant Circle and other interested parishioners were asked to help dismantle the brick labyrinth, which was needed before construction could begin. A volunteer team was formed, the work was done, and the bricks stacked and stored on the courtyard side of the front church steps for future use.

Photograph No. 8 - The original labyrinth

With brick as the separating paths and grass (dirt) path



Seeking approval for a new labyrinth:

At that time, we were also told that there would not be money in the project to replace the labyrinth, but that a new labyrinth was very much desired. We were asked to form a committee to work on the task of planning a new labyrinth and told that we would also need to raise the money for it at some point. We were to work under the authority of the Executive Team at the time, which consisted of ministers Rev. Gary Smith and Rev. Jenny Rankin, and Business Manager Melissa Perdue Gallo. As the capital campaign construction project neared completion, the Labyrinth Committee that had been formed got to work in earnest. We had been asked to consider if there were a different place on campus that might be better for the labyrinth than the courtyard and to find a sustainable design for which we could likely raise sufficient funds. After looking carefully at a number of alternative sites, the Committee determined that the most appropriate placement for the new labyrinth would indeed be back in the courtyard. It was the only campus position that was truly conducive to meditative walking of the labyrinth, felt far enough away from daily traffic on the campus, yet easily accessible to all, and felt safe and “cradled” within the campus, surrounded again by the sanctuary, the RE wing, and the cottages. At the First Parish Annual meeting of June 2010, the Labyrinth Committee presented plans for a new Cretan style, 7- circuit labyrinth in the courtyard re-using the bricks that had been stored for the lines and stone dust with binding for the paths. Much research had been done and we had determined that grass or natural plantings of some kind were simply not sustainable and stone dust paths would allow for drainage and be sustainable, and we felt we could raise about \$20,000 total that would be needed. While some work would be done by volunteers, the underlying layers would be professionally put down for sustainability. There were no questions nor comments after the presentation.

We planned to start fundraising the next fall with installation in the spring. On Sunday, October 3, 2010, the Labyrinth Committee began the planned fundraising appeal, coordinated with the Executive Committee for timing so as not to interfere with any other parish fundraising. We sent letters and emails as well as giving info in the weekly and monthly parish publications of the time, and had a table at coffee hours to answer questions and collect donations and pledges. We thought we were off and running! However, it came to our attention at that first Sunday coffee hour and over subsequent weeks that there were a few parishioners who now said they did not like the idea of a labyrinth once again being placed in the courtyard and/or they didn't like the materials we planned to use, with concerns that stone dust would be tracked into the meeting house. I note that from the June presentation at Annual Meeting to that October coffee hour, not one single person had contacted anyone on the Labyrinth Committee with questions or concerns about the project, so we did feel rather blindsided by

the reaction at the time of fundraising. We were also questioned by some about why we had the right to even be planning a labyrinth and fundraising for it.

While our fundraising continued, the Committee felt we had to take a step back and not proceed with installation. Unfortunately, the Committee also felt very much on our own as in the midst of other conflict going on in the parish surrounding Rev. Gary Smith's retirement and planning for who would replace him as senior minister, the Executive Team was silent on the labyrinth matter entirely, though we were working under their authority. As those who were suddenly against the labyrinth as proposed took their complaint immediately to the Standing Committee, the situation also brought to light that as a congregation under our governmental structure of the time, we did not have a clear system for conflict resolution, nor indeed perhaps any. All was still up in the air through that church year and Gary Smith's retirement at the end of it in June 2011. However, during that time, the Labyrinth Committee again started researching whether or not there might be other materials that would be more acceptable for the paths. In the fall of 2011, when interim minister Rev. Elaine Peresluha began her time with us, she met early on with the Labyrinth Committee. We explained the process and the difficulty we had been through and that we still believed the best placement for the labyrinth was in the courtyard, but we were working on finding different materials that could be more acceptable to those with concerns about the presented plan. Elaine was instrumental in giving the committee the green light to proceed and to speak with the small group who had objections and help them understand why we had the authority to do so. The Labyrinth Committee did later that year call an informal meeting for all interested parishioners to come with their questions and concerns. It was attended by about 40 parishioners. We began the evening with a full explanation of the process of how the Committee came into being, etc., and our work to that point in determining that the courtyard was indeed the best placement for the new labyrinth, all supported by a great PowerPoint presentation we had worked hard on. We also showed that we had indeed listened to concerns about the stone dust and had found new materials that we hoped all could be at ease with. The new plan was to use circular pavers from a local company that would allow us to have a full surface of pavers with a muted red for the path markings and gray for the paths. The next church year of 2012-2013, we finished the final fundraising, took our project to the Concord Historic Districts Commission and received approval.

Irl Smith:

Design, Construction, and Use

Starting in late 2009, we started to design a labyrinth somewhat similar to, but more durable than, the original brick-and-grass one. The first concept was to retain use of emplaced bricks to define the lines between the paths, with stone dust for the walking surface. Starting from an

accurate layout of the courtyard generated during the renovation, we saw that a labyrinth up to over 45 feet in diameter would fit, but somewhere between 30 and 36 feet was more in scale with the space. Another possible design had random-laid flagstones for paths, leaving grass between the paths as lines. One constraint was to remain outside the drip-line of the large sycamore tree there; this beautiful tree did not seem to be in excellent health and we did not want to contribute in any way to any decline. Eventually a circular labyrinth 32 feet in diameter located well away from the tree was chosen.

There was enthusiasm in First Parish for the re-creation of the labyrinth, and we made a couple of interim labyrinths. For the RE program, a four-circuit cloth labyrinth was designed and laid out by the Committee and then painted by the RE children (in early 2010). As part of the celebration of First Parish's 375th anniversary (in late 2011, during the tenure of Rev. Peresluha), a six-circuit grass-path labyrinth using most of the original bricks as lines was assembled out on the front lawn. Further consultations with the congregation, and the happy fact that a local company had a variety of pavers suitable for curved paths and circles, resulted in the decision to create a hardscape patio with the paths defined by contrasting colors and shapes of the pavers chosen. Detailed design of the labyrinth proceeded, showing where each of the approximately 4,340 pavers was to be placed, as did negotiations with the landscape company, ONYX Corporation, and the vendor of the pavers and other hardscaping materials, Ideal Concrete Block Co.

As a spiritual link to the original labyrinth, we designed an "altar square" made up of 13 of the bricks from the original labyrinth. The labyrinth pathway encounters the altar square four times but never crosses it; the altar square may hold a candle, a bowl of flowers, or other object when the labyrinth is being used for a ritual.

The condition of the ground where the labyrinth was to be constructed was unknown. When excavation started, it was hoped that removal of soil to a depth of a foot or so would suffice, with backfill of densely packed graded gravel over landscape cloth to prevent infiltration of soil. During the excavation it was found that the underlying soil was unsuitable at that level and eventually a depth of about four feet was needed. The major site preparation was completed, except for the final one-inch layer of fine sand, in late March, 2013; the screeded sand bed on which the pavers were to be hand-placed was added immediately before installing the pavers since the sand needed to be smooth and dry.

Installation of the pavers was an all-hands-on-deck operation. Some 40 members of the congregation, of all ages, signed up to carry and place stones, provide refreshments, and generally help with construction, which took place on April 13, 2013. The two construction

leads placed the stones for the center and then extended them out along the entrance path and also supervised the masonry sawing operation needed to reshape a few dozen pavers; the fact that only about 1% of the pavers needed to be cut was a testament to the clever design of the pavers. Members of the congregation carried the pavers, bucket-brigade-style, from the pallets where they were stacked to the active paver-laying area, and other members laid the pavers for the majority of the area, where the pattern was regular. The team leaders laid the non-regular portion of the pattern and started each of 28 circular courses of pavers. This was a huge job but we all worked together and finished the placing of all the pavers in a single day and also installed the edge-restraint system to keep the pavers from shifting.

The following day or two, one or two committee members carefully inspected the as-laid pavers and flipped over a few which were upside-down (the difference between the top and bottom was subtle but worth correcting). Then ONYX returned for the final part of the process, which was adding polymer sand to fill in gaps between the pavers and using a vibratory compactor to pack everything down.

Photographs No. 9 & 10 - The current labyrinth



Darien Smith:

A special mention should be made of Beth and Dave Dawson, who first brought the labyrinth to First Parish. Both Beth and Dave were in their 70s and important members of the Labyrinth Committee from beginning to end. As we planned the new labyrinth, Dave contributed ideas, did research and leg work, and was on his knees as one of the main paver placers the day it was built. Beth was there throughout planning and building also, though by then she was experiencing pretty severe dementia and wasn't often clear on just what we were doing. But she always lent her beautiful spirit and sunny disposition to the meetings and the project. Indeed, she happily helped pass the pavers to the placement team on installation day, even though she wasn't sure why, and she was an inspiration to all who were there.

On Sunday, June 2, 2013, the labyrinth was dedicated in a ceremony led by Rev. Elaine Peresluha right after the Sunday service. It was revealed that the Labyrinth Committee had chosen to honor the Dawsons by dedicating the First Parish Labyrinth in their honor. A plaque was installed near the labyrinth a short time later stating:

First Parish Labyrinth
Dedicated to
Beth and Dave Dawson
for their
Vision, Inspiration, and Energy
2013

Over the nearly nine years since the labyrinth was constructed it has served First Parish in many ways and shows no signs of age except for the graceful appearance of some moss between some of the stones. In addition to providing a dedicated structure for meditative walking, the labyrinth serves as a patio for social events such as outdoor coffee hours and a sacred space for ritual gatherings of spiritual groups such as the Women's Goddess Covenant Circle. It is also a fun place for children to walk and run after church or religious-education class. The labyrinth is proving especially valuable during the pandemic as an outdoor space for parishioners to gather safely.

21. Greeley Foundation History

Dana McLean Greeley Foundation for Peace and Justice, Inc., 1986 - 2006

Compiled by C.C. King

The Dana McLean Greeley Foundation for Peace and Justice was established in 1986, in honor of Rev. Greeley by friends & colleagues at First Parish in Concord.

Dana was present at the inaugural meeting to witness the embodiment of his commitment to the unique worth and dignity of every person through justice, peace initiatives and inter-religious dialogue and his belief in the power of human beings to bring about social change.

Rev. Greeley had served as President of the American Unitarian Association (1958-1961), and as President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (1961-1969). He was also the principal founder and a Vice-President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and served as minister of a number of churches in New England, among them Arlington Street Church in Boston (1935-1958) before coming to First Parish in Concord in 1970.

As written in its founding Statement of Purpose, the Foundation's goal was to "promote dialogue and leadership; to elevate integrity, compassion, honesty and courage; and to seek creative ways to realize the strong, joyous, vital and unifying power of Peace."

The Rissho Kosei Kei (RKK), a foremost Buddhist group and a leader for peace in Japan, was an early essential contributor to the new Greeley Foundation enabling its work and helping expand the vision.

In its first five years the Foundation worked internationally with leaders including President Jimmy Carter and the International Negotiation Network, as well as with Margarita Papandreou and the Women's Summit for Peace.

For the remainder of its twenty-year duration, the Foundation focused on grassroots organizations in the Greater Boston area that promote peace and social justice and directly serve underserved youth and build bridges between urban and suburban communities. The Greeley Foundation granted more than \$1.6 million to help organizations strengthen their base of support, reach more young people, and move to the next level of sophistication as an organization. Many of the grants were awarded as early seed funding that few other foundations were willing to provide.

The Foundation was dissolved in 2006, and its assets were used to fund new initiatives including the University of Massachusetts Lowell Peace Scholar, the Jericho Road Project, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and a fellowship at the Harvard Divinity School. The Harvard Library is the primary location of extensive archives representing both Rev Dana Greeley and The Greeley Foundation.